MT. CULMEN CLARION

A Newsletter of Mt. Culmen EC Church

*"What I tell you in the dark, say in the light;
and what you hear whispered, shout from the rooftops!"*

Volume 6 - Issue 10 - October 2023

Pastor
Rev. Jonathan J. Brown
717-205-6532

Lay Delegate
Rebekah Brown

Alternate Lay Delegate
Kenneth Bannon

Board President
Floyd Mast

Board Vice President
Delrea Ream

Board Secretary
Sharon Mast

Church Treasurer
Esther Stauffer

Trustees:
Floyd Mast
Barry Ream
David Rissler
Ian Pammer

Stewards:
Esther Stauffer
Joyce Garber
Kim Sweigart
Brenna Pammer

Members-at-Large:
Sharon Mast
Delrea Ream

The Fretful Sinners and the Fruitful Stick

– Rev. Jonathan Brown

In our ongoing study together of the Book of Numbers, we've spent several months now with the fallout of a very significant moment: the rebellion of Korah. If you remember, in the wake of Israel's refusal to obey God and enter the promised land, they were told to retreat back into the desert for a whole generation's time, forty years. But, as a way of not driving them into despair, God offered a series of new laws, climaxing in a new commandment that each Israelite should have tassels with a thread of priestly blue woven into it, as a sign of their dignity as a 'priesthood of all Israelites.'

In the very next scene, though, we run into trouble: a pair of rebellious forces. One is a man named Korah, a Kohathite Levite who is perhaps a cousin to Moses and Aaron. He comes from the tribe that's closest to the priesthood. Then there are a trio of men – On, Dathan, and Abiram – from the tribe of Reuben, which is the firstborn tribe; maybe they are angling for the rights of the firstborn to act as 'priest' to the larger family. In either case, these leaders pit the 'priesthood of all Israelites' principle against the hierarchy that God himself established in making Aaron and his sons the priests of Israel.

Moses is able to make the case to God that Korah, Dathan, Abiram, etc., are sinning, but that Israel as a whole is simply being misled and so deserves another chance. God takes Moses' advice, punishes the ringleaders, and... Israel promptly makes a liar out of Moses by mobbing him and Aaron for 'killing the people of the LORD.' Moses and Aaron look to God for rescue, and it's up to Aaron to then rescue his own persecutors from a plague of judgment, putting himself in the path of the oncoming Angel of Death with worship as the high priest's lone defense. It works: Aaron has brought salvation to Israel!

Which brings us to what we, in our English Bibles, call the start of chapter 17. (In the common chapter-and-verse numbering in Hebrew Bibles, chapter 17 started fifteen verses earlier.) With Aaron having saved Israel through worship, God is ready to put an end to this habit of infighting, this jockeying for power among Israel's tribes, who all seem to be living out of an envious place, all hungry to claim priestly privileges for their own. So God decrees a test. Each of the tribes of Israel is supposed to contribute a rod or staff made of wood, autographed by the most senior chief of that tribe with his own name. The Hebrew word for 'staff' and 'tribe' are actually the same word, *matteh*, so this staff is the official insignia of the tribe, as if it were a flag. Aaron will be the one to lend his own personal staff, which he carves his name into, to represent the Tribe of Levi to which he belongs (Numbers 17:1-3).

(Continued on Page 6)

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Mount Culmen Evangelical Congregational Church
1885 Turkey Hill Road, East Earl, PA 17519
Sunday Morning Worship: 10:00 AM

Board Meeting Notes (September 2023)

Last month, the Official Board of Mt. Culmen Evangelical Congregational Church convened its meeting after the worship service and special congreagtional meeting on Sunday, September 10, 2023, so as to conduct the regular business of the church. In attendance at the meeting were 12 out of the 13 members of our church board: Floyd Mast, Sharon Mast, Del Ream, Barry Ream, Kim Sweigart, Dave Rissler, Ian Pammer, Brenna Pammer, Joyce Garber, Ken Bannon, Rev. Jonathan Brown, and Rebekah Brown.

Opening with prayer and roll call, the board heard the customary reports.
Of these, the treasurer's report submitted *in absentia* by Esther Stauffer noted:

- August 2023 income of $8,038.99
- August 2023 expenses of $13,548.49
- a August 31 ending balance of $7,054.43

The secretary's report was accepted unanimously on the motion of Kim Sweigart, seconded by Ken Bannon.
The treasurer's report was accepted unanimously on the motion of Del Ream, seconded by Kim Sweigart.

The stewards had no report to give at this time.

The trustees had several items to report. In an update on the stained-glass window project, the trustees shared that more windows had been reinstalled, and that issues with the locks would be examined. If we have a fourth window redone, Moore Custom Art Glass would provide scaffolding. One potential obstacle noted was the present of several bee nets located outside the church near the next windows to be taken; however, Dave Rissler had examined these and found them to be dead, meaning he could remove them without concern before Carol Moore's next visit. Floyd Mast noted that the light out front was 2.5 hours behind, and he had straightened that out and replaced a blown light with an LED light. Finally, to a question posed to the trustees for an update on the land sale negotiations, Floyd was yet waiting on a response at the time of the September meeting.

Under the heading of old business, the board opened by discussing the matter of weed care at the church. Pastor Jonathan relayed a note from Esther Stauffer in which she said that she had not been able to find a suitable new weeding service as of the time of the board meeting. Del observed that she had heard of another church where each family takes turns taking care of weeding along one side of the church throughout the summer. After further discussion, Floyd remarked that perhaps a list could be generated by spring 2024. Also under old business, Esther informed the board that she had sent out thank-you cards for ingredient donations toward our recent church picnic.

Under the heading of new business, the board first turned to the question of lining up a musical group for our 2024 church picnic. The consensus of the board was that this year's band, Mountain Gospel Harmony Ministries, was very good. Barry Ream made a motion to seek them again for next year. This motion was seconded by Rebekah Brown, and the board voted unanimously in its favor.

Second, the board heard from Pastor Jonathan that the missing safe-deposit box key had turned up, and that Esther inquired what she ought to do with it. One board member suggested giving it to the pastor, though Pastor Jonathan supported the recommendation of another board member that it be kept on hand as a spare key.

Third, the board heard the reading of a fundraising letter from Pennsylvanians Concerned about Alcohol Problems (PCAP), written by their executive director Barry Heckman, and engaged in a discussion about how best to respond to it, i.e., by a one-time or recurring donation of financial support. After various perspectives were aired, the board decided to contact Barry Heckman at some future point to learn what support would be most helpful.

Fourth, Ken Bannon brought up that the upcoming month, October, is Pastor Appreciation Month. He encouraged the board to consider how best to honor Pastor Jonathan this year.

(Continued on Page 3)

(Continued from Page 2, "Board Meeting Notes")

Fifth, the board considered the upcoming celebration of Harvest Home, which Pastor Jonathan had recommended be set for Sunday, October 15, 2023. The question emerged as to which charity we should collect donations for. A long discussion ensued, with two major options (CrossNet Ministries, based out of New Holland, our usual beneficiary for Harvest Home, and the Northeastern Lancaster County Food Bank, based out of Terre Hill, and now a regular ministry we support on a month-to-month basis), as well as a third suggestion (City Gate, which has been working to fight homelessness in Ephrata).

The board proved to be divided between these possibilities. Some felt that we ought to continue our regular support of CrossNet. Others felt strongly to the contrary, that, due to the additional funding that CrossNet receives and the presence of income restrictions for some of their services, we should donate all we collect for Harvest Home to Terre Hill instead. (Indeed, a motion to this effect was made by Kim Sweigart and seconded by Barry Ream.) Still others suggested we focus more on the homelessness issue (which both City Gate and CrossNet minister to), and yet others proposed various compromise arrangements, such as a series of Harvest Home-style collections in October, November, and December, or a single collection to be somehow divided evenly between two charities or ministries.

Ultimately, after much passionate deliberation, and a show of hands indicating a need to consider the matter further, Joyce Garber made a motion to affirm the October 15 date but table all decisions on the recipient of our collections until the October board meeting. This was seconded by Del Ream, and passed unanimously.

Sixth, Pastor Jonathan informed the board he had scheduled our next Communion Service for Sunday, October 22.

Seventh, the board considered the matter of our fourth-quarter fellowship meal, which Mt. Culmen has developed a custom of holding on the same Sunday that we mark Pastor Appreciation Month. Pastor Jonathan suggested, after a review of the month's schedule, that October 15 or 22 be chosen (in light of October 1 as a board meeting, October 8 as immediately after our next soup sale, and Esther being absent for October 29). Rebekah Brown noted that it could prove challenging to manage Harvest Home and a fellowship meal on the same Sunday. Therefore, she moved that the fellowship meal be set for Sunday, October 22, after the communion service. This motion was then seconded by Ian Pammer, and it passed unanimously.

There being no further business after that, on motion of Barry Ream, as seconded by Dave Rissler, the board adjourned its meeting, to reconvene following the worship service on **Sunday, October 1, 2023**.

Statistical Report (August 2023)

	Worship Service Attendance		Offerings Received
08/06/23	33		$990.00
08/13/23	26		$1,035.00
08/20/23	30		$740.00
08/27/23	30		$800.00
	Average: 30 (29.75)	Total:	$3,565.00

Birthdays (October 2023)

10/13 – Hannah Kern (Barb Kern's granddaughter)
10/21 – Barry Ream Jr.
10/22 – Jesse Kern (Barb Kern's son)
10/25 – Joyce Good
10/25 – Curvin Ringler (Abby Eberly's son-in-law)
10/26 – David Good

Anniversaries (October 2023)

N/A

Fall Yard Sale, Craft Fair & Soup Sale

When: **Saturday, October 7, 2023**
8am – 1pm

Where: **Mt. Culmen EC Church**
1885 Turkey Hill Road
East Earl, PA

(8am until Sold Out)

Food items sold out of fellowship hall

Cold soups to take home, including:

- Chicken Corn Noodle
- Ham and Bean
- Chili
- Vegetable
- Pastor's Special

Pints: $4
Quarts: $8

Other items for sale:

- Baked Goods
- Ham & Cheese Sandwiches
- Hot Dogs & Chips

Food sales by cash or card (credit/debit)
Yard sales by cash only

Spaces for rent:

- $10 space in our fellowship hall
  - Table is provided
- $5 space in pavilion or on lawn
  - Bring your own table; or, rent one for an additional $5

Tables and spaces are limited, so call Cindy Ruth to reserve your space today!

(717) 368-9078

Upcoming Church Events

- **Mt. Culmen Fall Yard Sale / Soup Sale** – On Saturday, **October 7**, 2023, from 8:00am until 1:00pm, our church will host another yard sale and soup sale! See previous page for more information.
- **Harvest Home** – On Sunday, **October 15**, 2023, we'll celebrate Harvest Home! Inspired by the traditional late-September English harvest festival and by the harvest feasts of ancient Israel, some churches (like ours) take this as an occasion to express gratitude for God's provision during the year. From the harvest he's let us reap in our work, we are encouraged to give. We will bring our (canned / non-perishable) gifts to the church on Harvest Home Sunday, where they may be blessed and sent into the Lord's service.
  - Our recipient this year is CrossNet Ministries. Some regular needs for their food pantry include soup, pasta sauce, sugar, oil, crackers, individually packaged snack foods for kids, mac-and-cheese cups, dish detergent, laundry detergent, shampoo and conditioner, hand soap, and deodorant. Current needs for the rest of their ministry include paper towels, toilet paper, canned soda, bottled gatorade, disposable aluminum pans, baby wipes, copy paper, diapers (sizes 2, 5, & 6), and rolls of stamps.
- **Communion Service** – Sunday, **October 22**, 2023, will be our fourth-quarter communion service, a chance for a deep personal encounter with Jesus Christ. Pastor Jonathan will celebrate the Eucharist and distribute Holy Communion via the ministry of the stewards. "On the Lord's Day, gather together to break bread and give thanks, first confessing your failings so that your sacrifice may be pure; nobody who is in conflict with his companion should gather with you until they are reconciled, so that your sacrifice is not defiled" (*Didache* 14.1-2). "This food is called 'Eucharist' among us, of which it isn't lawful for anyone to partake except one who believes that the things that have been taught by us are true, and who has washed in the washing which is for the forgiveness of sins and for rebirth, and who lives in just the way that Christ handed down" (Justin Martyr, *1 Apology* 66.1). So please come spiritually prepared, as the Apostle of Christ tells us: *"Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup"* (1 Corinthians 11:28).
- **Fellowship Meal** – On Sunday, **October 22**, 2023, following our worship service, you're all invited over to the Fellowship Hall for our fourth-quarter fellowship meal! In addition, as our fellowship meal during Pastor Appreciation Month, this meal has been designated as being in Pastor Jonathan's honor. Come and bring a dish to share – and/or, just as importantly, your appetite for great tastes and great company!

Upcoming Community Events

- **New Holland Farmers Fair** – From Wednesday, **October 4**, through Saturday, **October 7**, 2023, the streets of New Holland will be taken over by the annual fair.
- **Cruise to the Forge** – On Sunday, **October 15**, 2023, from 11:00am to 3:00pm, there will be a car cruise at Historic Pool Forge (1940 Main Street, Narvon).
- **Kenya Through Our Eyes** – Also on Sunday, **October 15**, 2023, in the chapel at Garden Spot Village (433 South Kinzer Avenue, New Holland), from 6:30pm to 8:00pm, a returning missionary team will share about their recent adventures in Kenya. The program will be followed by Kenyan tea in the chapel lobby.
- **Coffee and Conversation** – On Thursday, **October 19**, 2023, at Garden Spot Fire & Rescue (339 East Main Street, New Holland), from 9:00am to 11:00am, you're invited to come discuss community issues with State Senator Ryan P. Aument. Light refreshments will be available.
- **Owls of North America** – On Saturday, **October 21**, 2023, at 2:00pm at Eastern Lancaster County Library (11 Chestnut Drive, New Holland), Jen Watson will present a virtual tour of the owls of North America.
- **Fall Festival** – Also on Saturday, **October 21**, 2023, the New Holland Park will be the scene of a fall festival sponsored by New Holland Church of the Nazarene from 2:00pm to 4:00pm, with free food and games.
- **Concert: Andrew Roberts Trio** – Also on Saturday, **October 21**, 2023, Garden Spot Village (433 South Kinzer Avenue) will host a 7:00pm concert by Andrew Roberts of the American Music Theatre in Lancaster.
- **Community Meal** – On Monday, **October 23**, 2023, from 5:30pm to 6:30pm, CrossNet Ministries will provide a free community meal at their youth center (110 West Franklin Street, New Holland).
- **ELANCO Library Autumn Jubilee** – On Thursday, **November 2**, 2023, the ELANCO Library will hold their second Autumn Jubilee fundraiser at the Silk Mill (328 East Main Street, New Holland), with the doors opening at 5:45pm. With a catered dinner of chicken marsala and baked rigatoni, jazz and swing music from the New Holland Band, and a silent auction, it's worth reserving your tickets ($60/person) by October 21.

(Continued from Page 1, "The Fretful Sinners and the Fruitful Stick")

The test or experiment is going to work like this: these twelve (or thirteen?) staffs will be placed overnight inside of the Tent of Meeting, set up right in front of the Ark of the Covenant, which is the earthly footstool to God's very own throne. Moses then relays these instructions to the tribal chiefs, explaining that God is going to make his will visibly known through what's going to happen (Numbers 17:4-5). Everybody agrees to the test (Numbers 17:6-7).

St. Clement of Rome, a disciple of the Apostle Paul, described this story but with a couple additions: "When jealousy arose about the priesthood, and the tribes quarreled as to which of them should be honored with that glorious name, he commanded the chiefs of the twelve tribes to bring rods inscribed with the name of each tribe; and, taking them, he bound them and sealed them with the rings of the chiefs and put them away in the Tabernacle of Testimony, on the table of God; and, closing the Tabernacle, he sealed the keys as well as the doors." Clement has picked up on the interest Scripture is taking here in ensuring that the tribal chiefs can all agree that the experiment is secure, free from interference. They need to see that Moses has nothing up his sleeve, no way of rigging the text or fixing the outcome in any way. The staffs are signed (like when a magician has you write your name on the card you picked), collected, put under lock and seal in a secure place where there can be no secret assistant at work, and even the keys are made secure so that no one can think that Moses sneaks in under cover of darkness.

What then? Morning dawns, the tribal chiefs excitedly approach the tabernacle, and *"Moses went into the tent of the testimony, and... Moses brought out all the staffs from before the LORD to all the people of Israel"* (Numbers 17:8-9). Every Israelite is allowed to be a witness to the public outcome of the test, in which each tribal chief is going to verify, "Yes, that's my staff, that's my signature." There will be no funny business. But there will be a miracle. For when Moses gets the staffs, *"behold, the staff of Aaron for the house of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds and produced blossoms, and it bore ripe almonds"* (Numbers 17:8). This lifeless piece of wood – because that's what the staffs were, dead wood – came to life overnight. And not only did it come to life, but – just as God had said it would (Numbers 17:5) – it sprouted, as if it were spring.

Further, it doesn't only sprout, which is all God had promised. God went *beyond* his promises here. St. Clement comments that "when morning came, Moses called together all Israel... and showed the seals to the chiefs of the tribes, and he opened the Tabernacle of Testimony and brought out the rods, and the rod of Aaron was found not only to have blossomed but also to be bearing fruit." Now, even if the rod were a whole almond tree, it takes an almond tree several years to mature and begin bearing fruit. Within a single growing season for a mature almond tree, it will take more than half a whole year from the time a bud blossoms until there's a ripe fruit there. So when we hear that Aaron's rod is now bearing *ripe almonds*, understand that years' worth of natural processes have been compressed into the span of a single night. God didn't have to go that far! And yet that's exactly what God did.

The tribal chiefs retrieve their barren staffs. No harm has come to their staffs. They get them back exactly in the old condition they gave them the night before: as inert objects, as ordinary symbols of authority *within* each tribe. They have not suffered any loss from this experiment – only that they now know that they are not chosen to be inside the Tabernacle of the LORD. But what about Aaron and his staff? His staff isn't an object any more. It's experienced a lifetime in a night, it's lived off of the fruitfulness of God's own holy presence, it's absorbed supernatural vitality and grace. It bears Aaron's name, it represents the Tribe of Levi, and yet it's symbolized him going beyond everything he is by nature. Does it belong back in his hands, the way things were yesterday?

No. God tells Moses: *"Put back the staff of Aaron before the Testimony, to be kept as a sign for the rebels, that you may make an end of their grumblings against me, lest they die"* (Numbers 17:10). Aaron surrenders his staff to God, taken out of Aaron's hands to be a miraculous sign preserved throughout the generations to come. But Aaron's gift is also the signal that seals Aaron's standing. It proves him to be the rightful high priest of Israel, the only one (besides Moses) who belongs in the Holy of Holies. This is the staff that puts down rebellion, that stops grumbling mouths in their malcontented tracks. Earlier, Israel had accused Aaron of being an anti-God murderer, a blasphemer against what they were sure God really was all about. But God has overturned their schemes. God has defended Aaron and his place. And God has brought Aaron's staff into a very selective collection of holy relics that represent God's own governance of and provision for Israel's life.

(Continued on Page 7)

(Continued from Page 6, "The Fretful Sinners and the Fruitful Stick")

To let God himself explain the significance of what had happened, the purpose of this test was that *"thus I will make to cease from me the grumblings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against you"* (Numbers 17:5). When the staff sprouted, it was a sign that it had belonged to *"the man whom I choose"* – and, by implication, the family that God chose, and the tribe that God chose. We'll explore that more next month, since God is going to give a long speech explaining again how Aaron (high priest), his sons (priests), and his tribal cousins (Levites) have their roles to play in order to help Israel safely accommodate the presence of a holy God in their midst.

Right now, it's important to observe what God has spoken in a miraculous way: Aaron is the high priest by divine right, he is the guarantor of any privileges and responsibilities the Levites have, and Israel's envious grumbling needs to stop. Israel's reaction, as the end of the chapter shows us, is less than enthusiastic. Oh, they don't doubt that God has spoken. They know he has! But they don't see this as hopeful: *"Behold, we perish, we are undone, we are all undone! Everyone who comes near, who comes near to the Tabernacle of the LORD, shall die! Are we all to perish?"* (Numbers 17:12-13). We can always count on ancient Israel to have, if nothing else, a flair for the dramatic.

St. Clement adds here: "What do you think, beloved? Didn't Moses know beforehand that this would happen? Of course he knew! But, so that no disorder should arise in Israel, he acted this way to glorify the name of the true and only God – to whom be glory forever and ever, amen!" All of these things aren't meant to terrify or intimidate Israel, but to manifest God's glory! God's glory is what this is all about. That's why he's insisting Israel be orderly.

The New Testament book of Hebrews hints, though, that there's an even deeper spiritual meaning behind the heart of this orderly system, which is *"the Ark of the Covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant"* (Hebrews 9:4) – the three holy relics from Israel's desert experiences. Alas, the author of Hebrews judged that *"of these things, we cannot now speak in detail"* (Hebrews 9:5). But the next generations of Christians, who may have known by word of mouth what the author of Hebrews was thinking, fill in what had to be passed over before.

A century later, there was a man named Justin, a Christian convert who was born and raised in Roman Samaria, and he explained that Aaron's staff – which, "by blossoming, proved him to be the high priest" – was an advance symbol, a foreshadow, a type, of the cross on which Jesus Christ was to be crucified. Eighty years after Justin, a Christian teacher from northern Egypt named Origen gave more detail, saying that this story shows that "since Christ is the true high priest, he alone is the one the rod of whose cross not only sprouted but bloomed and bore all this fruit in the form of believing peoples." In other words, Aaron's staff was a prophecy. It foretold, like Justin said, the crucifixion – the priesthood of Christ has to be expressed when he's etched into the wood. But it also foretold the resurrection, "for a dry rod sprouted when a dead body began to come to life again." Life from the dead – that's the story of the staff of Aaron, and it's the big truth of the resurrection! And why did God go so above-and-beyond making the staff sprout? Why did God make it also blossom and bear ripe fruit? Because from the cross, from the resurrection, come entire nations of believers, the fruit that Jesus offers to his Father in the Spirit. "So then, everyone who believes is sprouted from the rod of Aaron, who is Christ," Origen concluded.

When you read the Book of Numbers, when you think of Aaron's staff coming to life and growing fruit – that's a sign of you, the fruit growing from Christ's cross and resurrection. That's what shows us that Jesus indeed is *"a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God"* (Hebrews 2:17), *"a high priest of the good things that have come"* in the new covenant (Hebrews 9:11), presently *"appearing in the presence of God on our behalf"* (Hebrews 9:24).

And not only does Christ appear in God's presence for us, but where did the almonds on Aaron's staff come to rest? In front of, and then inside, the Ark of the Covenant, which was in the Holy of Holies. As fruit growing from the life of Christ, you have been laid in God's presence, nestled inside the holiest place, as a prophecy of your destiny – that all who lean on and abide in Christ's high-priestly authority will be brought into God's holy heart. *"God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses"* like a dead stick, *"made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,"* just as Aaron's staff was put in the Ark, *"so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus"* (Ephesians 2:4-7), amen!

Preaching Calendar (October – November 2023)

Worship services commence at 10:00 AM on Sundays. We hope to see you there with us!

October 1 (Pentecost 18):
Sermon Title: "Idols with a Pulse"
Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:26; 2:4-8
"Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness" (insert)
"Children of the Heavenly Father" (37)

October 8 (Pentecost 19):
Sermon Title: "Sanctifying Service"
Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:8-15
"A Charge to Keep I Have" (489)
"The Race of God's Anointed Priests" (insert)

October 15 (Pentecost 20):
(Harvest Home)
Sermon Title: "Feel That Holy Rhythm"
Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:14-18; 2:2-3
"Come, Ye Thankful People, Come" (543)
"O Day of Rest and Gladness" (526)

October 22 (Pentecost 21):
(Communion Service)
(Fellowship Meal)
Sermon Title: "Holy Offering"
Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:8-9 + Leviticus 2:1-3; 7:11-15
"Take My Life and Let It Be" (386)
"What Happiness Can Equal Mine?" (insert)

October 29 (Pentecost 22):
Sermon Title: "Crown of Creation"
Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:26-30
"Lord, Our Lord, Thy Glorious Name" (insert)
"Crown Him with Many Crowns" (69)

November 5 (Pentecost 23):
Sermon Title: "Discover and Define"
Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:10-14, 18-20
"We Search the Starlit Milky Way" (45)
"Let the Words of My Mouth" (568)

November 12 (Pentecost 24):
Sermon Title: "Venus, Mars, and Eden
Scripture Reading: Genesis 2:18-22; 1:27
"O Lord, May Church and Home Combine" (510)
"Blest Be the Tie That Binds" (209)

November 19 (Pentecost 25):
Sermon Title: "Wedded Love, Mysterious Law"
Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:26-28; 2:20-25
"The Voice That Breathed O'er Eden" (insert)
"The Church's One Foundation" (206 – vv. 1-2, 5)

November 26 (Christ the King):
Sermon Title: "Onward, Outward, Upward"
Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:28-31; 2:15; 4:1
"Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun" (479)
"Onward, Christian Soldiers" (456)

December 3 (Advent 1):
Sermon Title: "The Throne of His Father David"
Scripture Reading: 1 Sam. 16:4-5,11-13 + 2 Sam. 5:1-4,10; 6:17-19
"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (87)
"O Jesus, King of Glory" (insert)

Quotes for Thought

"If some people constrain us not to revere God nor entreat him, and threaten death to us, it is more happy to die than to do what is commanded by them … Because of this, the blessed Daniel feared God instead … For the cunning of the devil is always like this, to oppress and persecute and to maltreat saints so that they may not lift up holy hands while praying to God, seeing that the prayer of the saints furnishes peace to the world but punishment to the wicked. … For whenever we cease praying, the adversary prevails against us; but whenever we adhere to prayer, the power and authority of the evil one is abolished."

– Hippolytus of Rome

Commentary on Daniel 3.24.4-9 (c. AD 204), in *Hippolytus of Rome's Commentary on Daniel* (Gorgias Press, 2022), 122

"Do not render to God anything that has its origin in yourself, for God does not want to be repaid with what is yours. If you look to yourself to find the means of repayment, all you will give him is sin. The repayment he wants is not from your resources, but from his. … Make truth your repayment, and praise the Lord in truth. … Anyone who lies is speaking from himself, but anyone who speaks the truth is speaking from what belongs to God. … Render your homage in full awareness that you received everything that you offer."

– St. Augustine of Hippo

Exposition on the Psalms 102.4 (c. AD 410), in *The Works of Saint Augustine* III/19:81-82

"For the more anyone gives up for God, the more deserving will she be before God, and so much the greater reward will she receive."

– Agius of Corvey

Life of Hathumoda 1 (AD 875/876), in F. S. Paxton, *Anchoress and Abbess in Ninth-Century Saxony* (CUA Press, 2009), 120

"The hidden garden of the inward virtues... can be full and perfect with regard to merit, even though it never gives rise to an act. For if there is no outward occasion for someone to act outwardly, the inward virtue is enough for them, both for merit and for reward. For faith without works is dead, if there is an opportunity for working. But if there is no opportunity, the just man is justified from his inner faith alone."

– Robert Grosseteste

Hexaemeron 10.8.5 (c. AD 1230), in *Robert Grosseteste: On the Six Days of Creation* (Oxford University Press, 1996), 309

"A true pastor thus contributes to the well-being of men in body and soul, in property and honor. But beyond that, see how he also serves God and what glorious worship and sacrifice he renders. For by his work and word there are maintained in this world the kingdom of God, the name and honor and glory of God, the true knowledge of God, the right faith and understanding of Christ, the fruits of the suffering and blood and death of Christ, the gifts and works and power of the Holy Spirit, the true and saving use of baptism and the sacrament, the right and pure teaching of the gospel, the right way of disciplining and crucifying the body, and much more. Who could ever adequately praise any one of these things?"

– Martin Luther

A Sermon on Keeping Children in School (AD 1530), in *Luther's Works* 46:227-228

"The human mind cannot understand what joy the saints feel in the longed-for mansions, when the Creator wipes the tears from the eyes of the glorious ones. … There is no ending to the delight the blessed ones enjoy, and there is no end to that day, never again will it grow dark or be eclipsed, forever boundless, neither shifting nor moving. … The eyes of the saints in their glory are not dazzled by looking into the light, but they will be sharpened and will gaze unflinchingly: their sight will not be troubled by any action, praiseworthy though it be. Forever will they gaze on the Lord. … The souls behold him: they are happy and joyful in his tenderness; with all their might, they plunge into the sea of his goodness. All their concerns are to rejoice in his blessedness."

– Damyanos of Alqosh

On the Delights of the Kingdom 3, 11, 24, 26 (AD 1856), in *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 628:66-71

"Goodness is the supreme quality of life, and only goodness can win in the end. It may seem to go down in defeat sometimes in this life, but the end is not yet, and this life is very short."

– Clifford G. Twombley

Sermon given 21 October 1923 at St. James Episcopal Church in Lancaster, Pa., quoted in *News Journal* (22 October 1923): 13

PRAYER GUIDE

- ***We praise God*** **for all the wondrous blessings he's given us, most notably the ministry of his Son (in death, resurrection, and exaltation to the Father's right hand) and the gift of his Holy Spirit; and** ***we pray*** **that God would glorify his name above all else and would bring his kingdom more fully to earth.**
- *We pray for* **our denomination, our congregation, and the church universal**, that God would bless us at all levels with faithfulness, wisdom, vision, and fortitude to earnestly labor in his vineyard.
  - *We pray particularly for* our pastor **Rev. Jonathan J. Brown** and for **our church board**.
  - *We pray also for* **our Evangelical Congregational Church leadership**: our bishop **Randy Sizemore**, executive director **Kevin Henry**, and district field director **Keith Miller**; the **Global Ministries Community** under **Ted Rathman**; the **Kingdom Extension Community** under **Mike Snedeker**; the **Church Health Community** under **Gary Kuehner**; the **Missional Alignment Community** under **Bishop Randy Sizemore**; and the **Ministerial Development Community** under **Matthew Hill**.
- *We pray for* **our missionary partners** (such as **Dan Quigley** and others), that God would keep them safe and faithful, would focus their efforts on God's work, and would grant success in accordance with his holy will.
- *We pray for* **other churches and pastors in our community**, that God would keep all congregations united in one holy faith and devoted to the ardent service of one and the same kingdom and of its King, Jesus.
- *We pray for* the **salvation of our whole community and its maturation in Christian discipleship**, knowing that there is hope in Jesus for all people and for entire communities to reflect the righteous love of God.
- *We pray for* **an end to disease outbreaks** such as coronavirus, mpox, cholera, dengue, diphtheria, and RSV.
- *We pray for* **an easing to the economic suffering around the world**, especially due to the inflation surge.
- *We pray for* **those suffering in the wake of disasters around the world**, that God would have mercy:
  - *We pray for* those afflicted by natural disasters such as famine; drought; the Asian, European, and North American heatwaves; wildfires; Typhoons Saola and Haikui in the Philippines and China; Cyclone Daniel in Libya, Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey, Egypt, and Israel; Hurricanes Lee and Ophelia; tornadoes in China; flooding in Spain, Brazil, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Libya, Mexico, Guatemala, Nevada, and New York; landslides in Guatemala; earthquakes in Morocco and Italy; etc.
  - *We pray for* those afflicted by accidents such as plane crashes in Italy, Brazil, Kenya, and Mexico; boat accidents in Nigeria; train accidents in Chile andFlorida; bus/truck accidents in Iraq, Italy, Peru, Egypt, Montenegro, Malaysia, England, New York, and Illinois; fires in Vietnam, Indonesia, China, and Iraq (at a wedding); explosions in Brazil, Italy, Romania, Taiwan, Benin, Armenia/Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan; etc.
- *We pray also for* **those victimized by violence and social ills**, especially the Russian invasion of Ukraine, that the God of all comfort would make his presence manifest to the injured, traumatized, and grieving.
  - *We pray additionally for* those afflicted by the Uyghur genocide in China; war in Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen, Sudan, Myanmar, etc.; the Israel-Palestine, India-Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan, and Armenia-Azerbaijan conflicts; insurgency in Egypt, Colombia, Chad, Cameroon, Congo, the Maghreb, Nigeria, Niger, India, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Mozambique, Pakistan, South Sudan, Turkey, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Peru, and Libya; gang/cartel wars in Mexico, Ecuador, and Haiti; kidnappings in Mexico, Uganda, Nigeria, etc.; riots in Kyrgyzstan, Cyprus, and India; rocket attacks in Ukraine, Sudan, etc.; the vehicle-plowing incident in Australia; mass shootings in Canada, Mexico, Greece, and the Netherlands; shootouts in South Africa, Pakistan, Sweden, Indonesia, etc.; the mass stabbing in Australia; bombings in Myanmar, Colombia, Somalia, Gaza, Sweden, Pakistan (at a mosque), and Turkey; arson in the Netherlands; ambushes in Cameroon, South Sudan, and Mali; attacks on refugee camps in the West Bank, on a village in Kosovo, and on churches in India and elsewhere; the American opioid epidemic; human rights violations (e.g., abortion and human trafficking); and the refugee crisis.
- *We pray for* all who serve and protect us, including **civic leaders**, **police**, **firefighters**, **medical responders**, and **members of the military**: May God keep them safe, just, wise, sincere, humble, and accountable as they administer justice, guard against chaos, prevent harm, and defend the vulnerable.
- *We pray for* **our nation and its government** at all levels and in all branches, that God would move our leaders to repent of unjust or unmerciful practices and laws; that God would crown them with wisdom, security, peace, and civility toward all; and that God would give them godly hearts to live and govern rightly.

PRAYER GUIDE

- *We pray for* **the persecutors and maligners of the church around the world**:
  - *We pray for* the conversion of terrorists and other people of violence into disciples of the Prince of Peace.
  - *We pray for* the wisdom of God to be made manifest to skeptics and critics.
  - *We pray for* the Spirit's boldness to fill the hearts of all believers to witness to Jesus in life and in death.
- *We pray for* **the families and friends of many who have entered their rest in the past year**, including:
  - For the family of **Norbert Sedelbauer** (Ruth Snader's uncle), who entered rest on October 5, 2022.
  - For the family of **Jean Adams** (Sharon Horst's mother), who entered rest on October 14, 2022.
  - For the family of **Roy Sweigart** (Kim's father-in-law), who entered rest on November 16, 2022.
  - For the family of **Ginger Goudie** (the Hesses' friend Jim's wife), who entered rest November 28, 2022.
  - For the family of **Patricia and Bob Dietz**, who entered rest on December 3 and 4, 2022.
  - For the family of **Earl Pickel**, who entered rest on December 19, 2022.
  - For the family of **David Hurst**, who entered rest on December 22, 2022.
  - For the family of **Letty Clark**, who entered rest on December 25, 2022.
  - For the family of **Bob Forrey**, who entered rest on January 5, 2023.
  - For the family of **Paul Bauman** (Joyce Good's brother), who entered rest on January 6, 2023.
  - For the family of **June Harter** (Sue Eshelman's mother), who entered rest on January 24, 2023.
  - For the family of **Darlene Young**, who entered rest on February 1, 2023.
  - For the family of **Mike Diem**, who entered rest on February 8, 2023.
  - For the family of **Alvin Wise** (Jean Hess' uncle), who entered rest on February 22, 2023.
  - For the family of **Grace Sprecher** (Sharon Mast's aunt), who entered rest on February 22, 2023.
  - For the family of **Herman Martin**, who entered rest on February 25, 2023.
  - For the family of **Leon Hartranft**, who entered rest on March 11, 2023.
  - For the family of **Amanda Hoffert**, who entered rest on March 11, 2023.
  - For the family of **Lois Gift**, who entered rest on March 20, 2023.
  - For the family of **William Riegel** (Del's brother-in-law), who entered rest on March 27, 2023.
  - For the family of **Darryl Imler** (Leroy Stoltzfus' nephew), who entered rest on April 1, 2023.
  - For the family of **Glenn Weber**, who entered rest on April 4, 2023.
  - For the family of **Clarence Jones** (Floyd Mast's uncle), who entered rest on April 11, 2023.
  - For the family of **Linda Wonder** (Sharon Mast's stepmother), who entered rest on April 27, 2023.
  - For the family of **John Herr** (Abby Eberly's friend), who entered rest on April 29, 2023.
  - For the family of **Sherry Stoltzfus** (Esther's sister-in-law's mother), who entered rest on May 4, 2023.
  - For the family of **Jim Brubaker**, who entered rest on May 5, 2023.
  - For the family of **Clarence Bauman** (Joyce Good's brother), who entered rest on June 17, 2023.
  - For the family of **Geraldine Fauser** (Pastor Jonathan's friend's mother), who entered rest July 4, 2023.
  - For the family of **Ben Schweitzer** (Kim Sweigart's son-in-law's friend), who entered rest July 10, 2023.
  - For the family of **Mary Martin** (Abby Eberly's friend's sister), who entered rest on July 15, 2023.
  - For the family of **Ray Snader**, who entered rest on July 17, 2023.
  - For the family of **John Kendig** (Sharon Mast's brother-in-law), who entered rest on July 19, 2023.
  - For the family of **Mary Skiba** (Sally Arment's cousin), who entered rest on August 20, 2023.
  - For the family of **Ivan Zimmerman** (Ray Snader's brother-in-law), who entered rest on August 22, 2023.
  - For the family of **Della Bollinger** (Floyd Mast's aunt), who entered rest on August 27, 2023.
  - For the family of **Harley Steenhoek** (the Walkers' grandpa), who entered rest on September 2, 2023.
  - For the family of **Elsie Martin** (Jean Hess's great-aunt), who entered rest on September 8, 2023.
  - For the family of **Clarence Good** (Jean Hess's uncle), who entered rest on September 13, 2023.
  - For the family of **Luke Ringler** (Abby's son-in-law's brother), who entered rest on September 25, 2023.
  - For the family of **Pat Street** (Nancy Mountz's sister), who entered rest on September 27, 2023.
    - May the Lord give immeasurable peace, strength, and comfort to all who face loss and grief.

PRAYER GUIDE

- *We pray for* **all dementia sufferers** and for **their caretakers**, that God would lighten burdens, restore clarity to injured minds, and speak directly to hearts and souls with his comfort, his peace, and the light of grace.
- *We pray for* **all suffering from cancer** – (including Randy Vandill, Cindy Ebersole, Troy Frey, Lisa Mast, Betty Kennedy [Del Ream's niece-in-law], Earl Martin [Miriam Rissler's brother-in-law], Adrianne Hedges [Brenna Pammer's friend], Doris Snader, Gene Sensenig, Erwin Sensenig Jr., Titus Burkholder [Jean Hess' relative], Rev. Marlin Lafferty, Rev. Don Wert, etc.) – that God shield them from pain, restore their bodies, comfort them, and bless their doctors.
- *We pray for* the **other assorted health concerns (and other needs)** of:
  - Earl and Pauline Good + John Good (Earl's brother) + David Good + Dave Embry Jr.
  - Lorraine Burkholder (Shirley's daughter) + Linda Burkholder + Mary Andrews + Raymond Bannon
  - Floyd Mast + Steven Mast (Floyd's son) + Cindy Bannon + Marilyn Wilson (Cindy's mother)
  - Barry Ream + Delores Jaxel + Clair Kohl
  - Jeff Kohl + Henry Kohl + Shawn and Candace Sweigart
  - Cherri Snader + Lawrence Groff + Jim Becker + Don Pickle + Dot Yohn
  - Barty Messner + Edna Binner + Shannon Messner
  - Shirley Riggins (Deb Messner's mother) + Henrietta Hoshauer
  - Brandon Wilson + Jane Carr (Brenna Pammer's grandmother)
  - Jerry Felpel and Doris Getz + Dawn Acevedo (Cindy Hoffer's sister) + Paul Ford
  - Josh Kendig (Sharon Mast's son) + Connie Dieter (Leon and Jean Hess's daughter)
  - Larsen Houck (Shirley Good's great-grandson) + Kayley Smith (the Hesses' granddaughter)
  - Kathryn Shirk (Jean Hess's aunt) + Sonya Shirey (Jean's friend) + Dennis Wanner
  - Abby Eberly + Linda Sweitzer (Abby's friend) + Lindsy Ringler (Abby's granddaughter)
  - Ray Arment + Butch and Mike Skiba + Emily Sensenig + Lori Zimmerman
  - Violet Stauffer + Floyd Heuyard + Sharon Geib (Deb Kimmel's sister)
  - Veanna Baxter + Julia Reed (Veanna's sister) + Shirley Buchanan
  - Ken Styer + Lucy Weber + Bret Hoffert + Jethro Hursh
  - Jeremy Kurman + Warren Weinhold + Jody Freeman
  - Jess Pennepacker + Charles Yingst + Ralph Mountz
  - Carl and Grace Nolt + Vera Kochel + Carl Martin
  - Robert and Barbara Sparr + Rodger Whittaker
  - Elizabeth Zimmerman (John Eberly's sister)
  - Dorothy Long (Sharon Mast's boss's sister)
  - Madelynne Walker + Ben + Tim + Minerva Hufford
  - Troy Frey and both of his parents + Tory Lingg
  - Ken Keen and Nancy Fox (Floyd Mast's friends)
  - Donna Sensenig + Larry Sensenig + Daryll Sensenig
  - Delores, Ruth, Jeremiah, Bobby, and Ruth Snader
  - Carol Briggs (Ruth Snader's sister) + Ken Cochran (Ruth's cousin-in-law)
  - Linda Talbot (Cindy Ruth's sister) + Tom Schwer (Sharon Mast's stepbrother)
  - Cathy Bullock (Cindy Ruth's neighbor) + Kathy Mellinger (Cindy's friend)
  - Rebecca Lucas (the Walkers' family friend) + Rebecca Horst + Dillon Dewire + Barb Kern
  - Linda Ebert (Barb's friend) + the Bowmans (Barb's cousins) + Danielle (Barb's grandson's girlfriend)
- *We pray for* **other neighbors, friends, and believers in need**, that God would heal, provide, and comfort.
- *We pray for* **a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit** upon our church, our community, our county, our nation, the Evangelical Congregational Church, and the church universal. *We pray for* the whole church to be filled with a spiritual zeal for worship, evangelism, and discipleship. **May the fires of revival fall!**
- ***We praise God* for all the prayers we've seen him answer and for his everlasting faithfulness!**